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## SUCCESS STORY

# Investigative Journalism Roots Out Corruption in Bulgaria



Photo: Pro Media

*Na Chisto anchor Daniela Trencheva (right) interviewing a guest on the latest corruption investigation.*

*Over 2 million viewers have tuned in since the show, funded by USAID and produced by the Broadcast Training Center ProMedia Foundation, was first launched.*

*“Na Chisto” currently has a 22-25 percent market share of the national television audience and airs at mid-day on Sunday on one of the major national networks, Nova TV. Approximately 400,000 people view each episode.*

“Na Chisto” can be translated as “to come clean,” an apt title for a Bulgarian television program that since 2003 has been investigating allegations of corruption in the public sector. The program has increased public awareness about corruption and resulted in concrete actions against corrupt officials. The parliamentary committee on anti-corruption and several city councils have reviewed cases brought to light on the program. The following are specific cases uncovered on “Na Chisto”:

- Before parliamentary elections in 2005, the program exposed the illegal jamming of the only local opposition radio station in northeastern Bulgaria, prompting intervention by local law enforcement authorities in the city of Duloovo. With the information gained from the “Na Chisto” investigation, the jamming device was found on the roof of the mayor’s office. The investigation into the incident is ongoing.
- In March 2005, the director of the Bulgarian postal service was fired after the program exposed his breach of the public procurement act by favoring a private security company.
- In May 2005, the program helped break a human trafficking ring exposing a scheme for selling Roma babies in Greece.
- The privatization of the Bulgarian State Shipping Company was stopped after the program revealed that the company’s former director received biased treatment in favor of his new company.
- “Na Chisto” exposed illegal activity within the Bulgarian prison system, including the sale of drugs and alcohol to inmates and inappropriate diversion of funds to feed pigs in the prison-run farm. This information led to the suspension of the Plovdiv prison director, who was accused of abusing funds and criticized for the facility’s appalling living conditions—shown by “Na Chisto” to be worse than conditions on the pig farm.
- “Na Chisto” raised public awareness about a draft amnesty law in February 2007. The draft law would have released recently arrested pedophiles and pimps, while extending existing sentences for petty thieves. The law was not passed.
- Corruption among university officials has come under “Na Chisto” scrutiny. In 2003, charges were brought against the president of the University of Veliko Tarnovo after the program discovered that he was involved in establishing illegal educational centers across Bulgaria through his own private companies. The following year, the show revealed that the President of Burgas University, received political support for an illegal re-election in exchange for advanced degree diplomas issued to government officials. He was fired and the evidence gathered by “Na Chisto” was used to bring charges against him.

While corruption remains a serious problem in Bulgaria, “Na Chisto” has helped build popular support for transparency and accountability within public institutions.